

BALLET

TODAY

Christmas Greetings
from
ULANOVA



DECEMBER, 1956
Price 1/6

BELINDA WRIGHT and
JOHN GILPIN in
HARLEQUINADE

Ballet Today

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BACKSTAGE PHOTOGRAPH

Dancers of the Festival Ballet return to their dressing rooms after a performance of Swan Lake.

Photo by Mike Davis



GOODWILL

At a press conference held during October the British Council pointed out the effect of a visit such as the Bolshoi Ballet to this country, and stated that our own scale of activity in sending companies and artists abroad compares unfavourably with many other countries, and that as a result we are failing to make adequate use of this powerful means of gaining goodwill and of influencing public opinion in the world today. After reviewing the situation the Committee for Drama, Opera and Ballet considered that the minimum programme for this section should be one major tour of Europe each year, and in a cycle of three years a more extended tour of Europe each year or a tour to the Middle East and Far East or one to Latin America. In addition there should be an annual representation at festivals etc. where only small subsidies are required.

PRESENTATION

The Russian and English stage staffs got on so well together that on the completion of the Bolshoi Theatre Ballet's season at Covent Garden the English staff presented their Russian counterparts with Ronson lighters as a token of friendship.

FAN CLUB

A fan club has been started in New York for ballerina Mary Ellen Moylan. Members are required to pay a yearly subscription of 10/6d. for which they will receive a membership card, an autographed photograph of the star, a copy of an annual journal to be published in January and a quarterly newsletter.

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EXPERIMENT

Potential young athletes in the field of high jumping and hurdling are taking special classes based on exercises used by students of ballet. The pilot scheme, agreed upon as an experiment by the Royal Academy of Dancing and the Specialists Club Committee, has been in operation for a month, and candidates receive three one-hour classes a week based on the need for development of control, co-ordination and rhythm.

BACK STAGE

SOUVENIR

Sadler's Wells Ballet had their own souvenir booklet printed ready for their now cancelled visit to Moscow. With format similar to that of the Silver Jubilee book recently published by Covent Garden Books, the context is in Russian.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

BALLET TODAY is published on the 25th of each month with the exception of two combined issues: Jan./Feb. and Aug./Sept. Please remember that the next edition is a combined one, and the publication date will be the 16th January.

SPOTLIGHT

The mass of people pouring down into the foyer after the first night of the Bolshoi Ballet at the Davis Theatre Croydon saw Alicia Markova, who had also been present at the performance. So great was the crush of admirers seeking her autograph, that the extra police, drafted to the theatre for the protection of the Bolshoi Company, had to be transferred to the front of the theatre, to clear a path before Markova could make her way to her car.

POPULAR VIEWING

The B.B.C.'s audience research department have just issued viewing figures for the Bolshoi Ballet. Nine and a half million people (just over half the adult television audience in Britain) watched the performance of *Swan Lake* which was preceded by excerpts from films of the Bolshoi Theatre. Included in this total were two and a half million viewers in London alone.

WELL CHOSEN

A number of well-known authors in this country were asked to make tape recordings in talks about themselves and their work for broadcasting in the *School of the Air* feature in Australia. Pigeon Crowle was chosen to represent ballet. This project was launched by a famous firm of Australian booksellers, and has aroused considerable interest in educational circles.



Many beautiful and striking photographs were taken of Galina Ulanova during her visit to London, but the one printed above is the happiest. With all the initial troubles at an end, with memories of the roar of applause from their audiences, Ulanova and Lavrovsky sit happily in the Royal suite at London's Opera House answering questions put to them by the British Press.

Ulanova danced, and Londoners felt privileged to witness this miracle. And what did Ulanova think of her reception here in London and elsewhere? Below I pass on the message Ulanova sent to our readers just before she left London.—ESTELLE HERF.

Christmas Greetings from Ulanova

WHEN I light the candles on my Christmas Tree, I shall place one near the very top in memory of my wonderful visit to England in the autumn of 1956.

I shall think of the warm-hearted welcome the people of London gave me—people who flocked to see the performances of our Bolshoi Ballet and followed them not merely with their eyes, but with their souls. I shall think of the patient queues, waiting days and nights on the mere chance of getting tickets; I shall think, too, of all those who were disappointed, and to these especially I will send my love and my hopes that before very long international cultural relationships may permit a more constant interchange of visits between people of all countries.

People! When you think of it, the world, with all its possibilities and complexities, its joys and ideals consists only of people! The artist can reach the souls of all, for Art is international and free from language barriers. But art must be based on truth, and this can only be achieved by going back to humanity for inspiration.

It is because of the sympathetic contact I established with the people of England that my visit to London meant so much to me. We were handicapped in many ways—especially Lavrovsky, and my husband the chief scenic designer, Rindin, encountered unimagined difficulties in adapting their creations to the smaller stage at Covent Garden, and in staging big crowd scenes with far fewer people than are at the choreographer's disposal in Moscow—but with good will on all sides, and not least on the part of our company and the efficient staff at Covent Garden, these difficulties were overcome, occasionally even with some slight gain to an intimate scene here and there. It was a season of tremendous effort and no little strain, but it has left us all with the happiest memories, and we are all determined that when we come again—and we hope it may not be too long until we do—we will bring some entirely new offerings with us. These will undoubtedly reflect the interchange of ideas between your own competent Ballet and ours.

So now—a VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS to all readers of *BALLET TODAY*."

G. Ulanova



LONDON BALLET MONTH

By
A. V. COTON

A rehearsal picture of Antonio taken at the Palace Theatre London at the opening of his season. Antonio directs his "stand-in" who is holding the suits Antonio will wear in each number. Sitting at his side is Rosita Segovia, who sings and dances in the show.

THE current seasons being given by the Spanish Companies of Antonio and Luisillo, and the forthcoming visit of Jose Greco, suggest that London provides boom conditions for Spanish dancing. But the law of averages works less well in theatrical than in any other kind of business enterprise, and this sudden influx of several kinds of dance company from Spain owes much to coincidence—the coincidence of various impresarios all taking a risk at the same time with the same sort of dance attraction.

Yet there is something in the idea that London is a good market for the sale of Spanish dancing; since 1945 we have seen here every company of note at least once, and, as with ballet, folk-dance companies need to make an impression on London the better to sell themselves in other places. And it is undoubtedly the ballet renaissance of the past twenty years that has created a big audience potentially interested (or at least willing to be interested, once they get inside a theatre) in other forms of dance. Spanish dance companies are reaping a worthwhile harvest as a direct consequence of the Londoners' fascination with ballet.

Yet it is only within comparatively recent times—say, the past thirty or forty years—that Spanish dancers in any numbers have visited other countries; the whole of the present revival of Spanish dancing and, more important, its shaping into forms acceptable inside a European theatre, can probably be credited to La Argentina, a former ballet pupil who became the first great exponent of what we today identify as "Spanish Dancing".

As all forms of folk-dance have to be worked upon, stylised, tamed, or clarified, when offered to non-native audiences, so a great deal of arrangement goes into the spectacles offered by Spanish dance companies. With the Argentina connection in mind this suggests that a lot of what we see in this sort of programme has been probably balletised—its earthy shapes, complex geometrical patterns, monotonous rhythms, have been smoothed over (*disinfected* might almost be the word) on their transit from fairgrounds, carnivals, market-squares, inn courtyards to the stages of European theatres.

As the *maitres-de-ballets* of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries in France, Italy and Spain, took over the European peasants' dances and the primitive dances that explorers and soldiers had picked up on their travels in Africa and the New World, artfully adapting them into shapes that the courtier could perform, so today the leading Spanish dancers have modified, cunningly re-arranged and adapted items from the great catalogue of native Spanish dances.

This heritage is probably richer in its forms, and variations of those forms, than even the big vocabulary of folk-dances of Russia; it has an uninterrupted history of over two thousand years and bears recognisable influences of Hellenic, Hebraic and Moorish cultures....

When we see the programmes given by Antonio, Amaya, Greco, Luisillo, Lopez, we have visual evidence of almost every civilising (or, at least, cultural) influence that has made its mark on the Mediterranean, or South European, way of life since the time of the Greeks: myths, music, traces of gypsy migrations, of Jewish influxes, of Moorish conquest, of Arabic philosophy, all contribute to some parts of a modern programme of Spanish dancing.

For years one of Antonio's strongest admirers, I probably stand alone in assessing his importance by his splendid showmanship; few of even the best organised ballet companies of the past forty years have so consistently shown the clear artistic guidance of one brilliant dance-intelligence, as does his group. Themes, costumes, properties,

scenery, music, dance-style—all are planned or suggested or modified by him; and he is an outstanding performer. Lately he has built his company to its high level of theatricality by blending this excellence of method with some first-class dance talents. (The professional disease of most Spanish performers, particularly bullfighters and dancers, is to surround themselves with inferior supporters in order that their own work may seem the more dazzling; this tendency Antonio has completely passed by.)

There are some fine dancers in the company, both male and female; on the visual evidence the male dancers seem to be wholly masculine—metaphorically speaking, you can see the hair on their chests all the time. Paco Ruiz and Antonio de Ronda are of the same class as the two leading ladies, Rosita Segovia and Carmen Rojas; the items are danced throughout and depend very little on their stories or atmospheres, yet the latest programme must be faulted for carrying too many former successes and one total failure—the dance drama "By the Guadalquivir". This item, based on poems by Garcia Lorca, simply does not transmute the essence of those poems into the visual action; the groups of abstractions and traditional characters have no significant movement and, choreographically, the work is as banal as any pupil's "experimental" ballet seen in an English ballet school.

Luisillo and his company at the Prince's Theatre, offer an interesting programme in which the dancing is amplified and to a large extent supported by rather too much "production work". Three big dance dramas—tragic, comic and religious in intent—are overloaded with naturalistic acting and vocal interruptions from their performers, or are too naive to be interpreted in dance except of a pure, newly invented kind. The *Sinfonia Sevillana*, beautifully using basic dance forms in a sculptural and lyric manner (rather in the style of parts of Massine's symphonic ballets), is a winner; and *Polo*, an excellent arrangement by Joaquin Nin of old Spanish songs, fitted with appropriate dance movements, is another high-spot of an always interesting programme.

Luisillo dances extremely well, when he will let himself go; he seems to be more interested in acting than in dancing much of the time, yet he commands an excellent—if limited—technique of flamenco and South Spanish folk-dance forms.

A promising looking venture is a team Susana and Jose, who have danced a good deal in Europe and, before giving some single performances at outlying theatres last month, gave a Press preview of some of their works; these were enough to suggest that they will be worth watching for, as and when they can arrange a London-season. Both are, for Spaniards, tall, but with elegance and fine style, and their *cante hondo* singer sounds like a really first class specimen.

The Bolshoi Ballet's three-night stand at Croydon showed a 19-piece *divertissement* programme in which all the principals and many of lower ranking showed their paces—and what paces! There were classical numbers from *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Casse Noisette*, modern classical items using the males' phenomenal gifts as supporters, folk dances from many regions, a complete ballroom scene from the opera *Ivan Susanin* and a witches' sabbath dance on the Gounod *Faust* music. Ulanova danced *The Dying Swan* in a way that did not make one recall Pavlova; she was absolute and unique and quite unlike anyone else in the role. It was altogether a suitable pendant to the Covent Garden season, with admired soloists coming to the fore and showing that there is plenty of talent to fill Russia's ballerina ranks for the next twenty or thirty years.



Galina Ulanova in *The Dying Swan* taken at *The Davis Theatre, Croydon*. Photo: Houston Rogers

PRESS-EYE VIEW OF THE BOLSHOI

EVERYONE expected the national press to "do the Bolshoi proud" on its opening night, and of course it did, maintaining it throughout the season with a varying tempo. Reports ranged from individual performances of the dancers to news stories, and some not so objective attempts at criticism.

Weeklies, national dailies, provincial press, and the society mags, all gave printed comments of some kind. *The Financial Times* devoted no less than twenty-two column inches to *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* alone.

Here are some of the comments picked at random. *The Liverpool Daily Post's* music critic commenting on the Bolshoi *Swan Lake*, spoke of the "theatrical conviction and sincerity" conveyed by each of the dancers. But he had reservations, "All is not on the credit side however. The sets often seem clumsily old fashioned." He goes on to comment that "Sadler's Wells choreography would seem to be both more varied and more subtle." He concludes with praise for Fadeyev for "his staggering display of virtuoso dancing."

The writer of *The London Letter* in the *Aberdeen Press & Journal* said about the Bolshoi "I don't expect to repeat the experience in my lifetime". According to him their main aim is "... to present an eye-ful that will stagger the masses with its magnificence. Subtlety is eschewed." But again he felt "no sense of disappointment with Struchkova", in *Romeo and Juliet*.

The Tatler, society magazine, introduces us to George Culley, eminent ballet critic, "who with passion and judgment examines the Bolshoi ballet", (their words). Mr. Culley observed that Ulanova "dances like a feather or leaf, or technically perfect like a prima ballerina, but never like an adolescent Juliet". Of Zhdanov as Romeo, he said, "He is an athletic performer on the heavy-weight side, at his best with a rapier in his hand."

Summing up Mr. Culley said that the customers got "entertainment as rich as a plum cake made by Mrs. Beeton."

The rival magazine *The Sketch*, devoted a two inch panel contributed by J.B. who told us that, "though we will get more in the classical ballets, *Swan Lake*, and *Giselle*, it was strange to find so little dancing in *Romeo and Juliet*." He compared it to the over emphatic mime of a silent film.

The Scotsman waxed effusive, headlining *The Fountain* as *The Bolshoi Arabian Nights*. Their ballet critic called it opulent, the dances were

breath-taking, virile, and precisely the sort of thing of which the Russians are past masters.

The Daily Herald headlined *Liberace* at the Bolshoi in bold type, but gave only one paragraph of three lines to comment on Struchkova and the dancing.

J.H.M. in the *Manchester Guardian* told us that in *Swan Lake*, "the corps de ballet was drilled to guardsman-like precision. Farmanants, and Khoklov were formidable in their leaps and turns. Chadarein and Kondratieva, might be mentioned for their relentless technical assurance." But he thought that the production was jaded and unimaginative, he predicted that the Bolshoi would learn from Sadler's Wells.

"A brilliant executant, she was the embodiment of the enchantress in whose hands the unfortunate Prince Siegfried was as wax". With those words the ballet critic of *The Scotsman* summed up the performance of Timofeyeva in *Swan Lake*. This time he found Farmanants, "descriptive of a piece of animated elastic."

C. B. Mortlock in *Punch* assured his readers that the legendary Ulanova had not been over-rated. Unlike George Culley of the *Tatler*, he found that Ulanova, "was in every gesture, movement and look, the young girl of the poet's imagination."

The Glasgow Herald found nothing wrong with Zakharov's choreography in *The Fountain*. Their music critic reported that "throughout the evening the truly amazing qualities of the Bolshoi dancers were always evident, for Zakharov's choreography is fully worthy of their talents".

Ernest Bradbury in the *Yorkshire Post* headlines his comments with, *New Bolshoi looks back to Imperial Days*. He was referring to *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*. Mr. Bradbury found nothing good in the Bolshoi production, he told us that he was left "with the conclusion that as far as the Bolshoi ballet of 1956 is concerned ... modern expressive art, seemingly, has passed them by."

Apparently the audience did not share his views for he reports that the dancing of Lapauri and Struchkova "brought forth a spontaneous gasp of awe from the audience." Whilst of the warriors dance, he reported that "the audience thundered approval of that particular scene." He concludes on a magnanimous note, "Even at this it is probably better than the *Miraculous Mandarin*."

A. J. COX

SUCCCEEDING in meeting Bolshoi producer and choreographer Leonid Lavrovsky, is no easy matter. In fact I classify it as one of my major operations of the Bolshoi season. Time and language were the main enemies, but eventually they were beaten and we finally met in his hotel, where, with the aid of a Russian-speaking friend of mine, Lavrovsky gave me his impressions of the Bolshoi season and the reception accorded to the company. He also discussed with me various points about the productions.

Lavrovsky, tall, clean-shaven, with slightly greying hair, and kindly, deep-set eyes, belies his fifty-one years. He was born in Leningrad he told me, in 1905. Both his parents were artists. At eleven years of age he entered the school of the Kirov Theatre (then the Mariinsky), where he was trained by Andrianov, and Ponamarev, graduating from the latter's class in 1922.

He entered the Leningrad company as a soloist and by 1924 was dancing leading roles in *Swan Lake*, *Raymonda*, *Corsaire*, *Chopiniana*, *Nuits d'Egypte*, and other ballets. From 1934 onwards he concentrated more and more on choreography and teaching.

There is nothing of the imagined "fearsome Russian" about Lavrovsky—one feels completely at ease in his presence, and his air of modesty immediately impresses one. Having cut the formalities to a minimum due to time, and briefly explained that the readers of *Ballet Today* were anxious to know what he thought about ballet in general, and the London season in particular, I plunged in with my first question.

"What are your impressions of the London audiences and the reception given to the company?" I asked him: he thought for a moment, smiled, and said, "Every one of our appearances was received very warmly by the audiences. We particularly noticed how sincere these expressions were. The opinions expressed on the performances of the young dancers, as well as those of Ulanova, were very gratifying. These good notices were a vindication of our own opinion of them. We feel that we did right in bringing the young ones with us."

He was convinced that the success of the season was due to the great measure of contact established between the company and the audience. "There is nothing worse for the artist than a bored audience," he said. "One thing that has been abolished"—Lavrovsky went on—"is the preconceived notion that the English audiences are cold and unresponsive. They know how to look and listen. The old prejudice of the 'cold English' has been destroyed, and I personally am gratified at the response to our efforts."

His appreciation of the audiences was matched by his high regard for the way in which the technical staff, and stage management at Covent Garden contributed to the company's success.

Our talk did not continue without interruption, for before he had had time to finish answering my first question, the telephone disturbed us to inform him that his next appointment was due. Assuring the invisible voice that he would come in twenty minutes, Lavrovsky again picked up the threads of the discussion.

What did he think of the adverse criticism of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*?

This ballet by Zakharov was written many years ago, at a time when they were trying to deal effectively with big dramatic themes. Zakharov in creating the ballet used those movement and dance forms which to him seemed most suitable in developing the dramatic theme. When this was done—in 1934—the ballet itself was a progressive phenomenon. It broke new ground, and elaborated new ideas.

These were the successes, but that is not to say that *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* has nothing on the debit side. Now that so many years have passed, and so many problems have been solved, the negative aspects are beginning to make themselves felt. He was inclined to concur that much of the criticism of Act II was justified.

Lavrovsky agreed that it is always essential in the light of experience to revise and alter where necessary. "The theatre is not a museum," he told me. "When we find weaknesses we must correct them, but these corrections can only be made by the choreographer concerned. In this case it is Zakharov, and I have no doubt that these faults when seen by him will be adjusted."

Continuing our talk along these lines I was anxious to find out whether it was true that without *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* there could have been no *Romeo and Juliet*, and whether the *Fountain* represented the first attempt to present great dramatic themes in terms of ballet.

Lavrovsky was inclined to doubt whether my first point was wholly correct. He pointed out that choreographers like all creative artists develop along their own lines, each in his own way making a contribution to a final idea.

He himself had worked on several dramatic themes, before tackling Shakespeare. He had used the works of Pushkin and George Sands. In 1934 he choreographed *Fadette*, based upon Sand's *La Petite Fadette*. Later he adapted for ballet Pushkin's work, *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*. He also choreographed a third work about this time, called *Katrina*, dealing with the serf theatre of Russia.

Shakespeare had always held a fascination for Lavrovsky and he cherished the idea of one day creating a ballet from one of his works. Both his own experience in attempting previous works, as well as those of Zakharov in creating *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, helped him materially in successfully re-creating *Romeo and Juliet* on the ballet stage.

The importance of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, he pointed out, was that by using the medium of dance with sense, i.e. active dance, Zakharov had transferred successfully a work of literature to ballet in the true spirit of Noverre.

Ballet in Britain owes a great deal to Diaghilev, though I sometimes wonder if we are not inclined to overestimate this contribution which was in no way a creative one. I put this to Lavrovsky, who was very quick to point out that Diaghilev's services to art were very great indeed. "But," he continued, "they are different from the way the west sees them."

Diaghilev was a great lover of the theatre. He wanted to develop it. He was without doubt, erudite and cultured, possessing a wide knowledge of every sphere of the theatre. It is impossible however, to judge people out of context of time and space. Therefore, to assess Diaghilev, we must see him in relation to the time when his activities commenced.

It was in the Petipa period, (whose contribution likewise cannot be overestimated), but at this period the ballet theatre was in very serious need of reform. The music was mainly Minkus and Pugni. Designers were able to create only 'pretty pictures', and ballets were staged purely as diversissements. Opposing this, Diaghilev gathered around him young people like Fokine, the true reformer of ballet, Benois, Bakst, Golovine, and others. All this provoked an interesting 'flare up' of art in Russia.

Diaghilev's contribution to all this was that he was able to bring together all these progressive elements, but contributions to this upsurge were made by each one of the group, notably Fokine. Fokine succeeded in drawing to him the younger dancers, the most important of whom was Anna Pavlova. Whilst giving Diaghilev his due, those who did the work were Benois, Bakst, Fokine, and others."

Lavrovsky went on to tell me that he had appeared in productions of *Petrouchka* until the ballet was discontinued in the late twenties. He also confirmed what Mr. Chulaki had told us at an earlier press conference—that the Bolshoi would mount a new production of *Petrouchka*.

I asked him if it would be a completely new version or whether it would follow the original Fokine.

At this point the phone rang again. It was the patient "next appointment" reminding him that the twenty minutes was long since past. Assuring the voice that he would soon be down, Professor Lavrovsky smiled, shrugged his shoulders and took up the point about *Petrouchka*.

"We have not yet decided about the new production. Some say it should be preserved intact, others say that it should be an entirely new conception of the work. But even if it was the Fokine version that we decided to do, it could not be an exact copy of the original. For the theatre moves, and is affected by life and movement. The theatre is a living force, it is not like a painting, which remains more or less as the artist originally conceived it. But of course even the painting changes, for it loses some of its original colour. When we have decided on *Petrouchka*, we will try to produce it on a level with all our other successful works."

There still remained a whole host of questions that I wanted to put to Lavrovsky, but I thought of the hour that the unseen voice had waited, and decided very regretfully to put my last question.

"Professor Lavrovsky when will you and the company come again?" He smiled and said, "It is difficult to say that it will be on such and such a day or month, but it is certain that we *will* come again if you want us, and next time we will bring a different repertoire. This will enable you to see not only old friends in new works, but other dancers who were unable to come this time."

CHICAGO

GEORGE JACKSON

Superficial Thoughts on Contemporary Criticism

The week of August 5th, Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo danced at the open-air pavilion of Ravinia Park near Chicago. Repertory and personnel were almost identical with those of the company's Christmas season at the Civic Opera House in Chicago (1). The novelty of the summer season was the type of criticism levelled against the company.

More than any other big ballet troupe in the United States, Sergei Denham's BRdMC has displeased the critics. Looking through reviews of past years, I find that the most common complaint is that of sloppy productions—meaning an undisciplined corps, faded decor, shabby costumes and the choreography sometimes half forgotten. Their virtue seems to have been an ability to evoke the peculiar style

of each ballet despite the technical flaws of production. This year, some critics consider the virtue a flaw.

For example, Doris Hering (2) complains that "there were four ballerinas, all looking as though they had descended upon the company from different epochs in the history of dance". That the ballets in which these ballerinas appeared were also from different epochs seems irrelevant, so that Miss Hering criticises Nina Novak for dancing *Black Swan* (a late 19th Century creation) in a style approximating that of the late 19th Century and Irina Borowska for dancing *Scheherezade* (from the Ballet Russe repertory) in a style approximating that of Ballet Russe. Conversely, she praises Alicia Alonso for dancing *Giselle* (one of the oldest ballets in the repertory) in a contemporary manner.

I do not quote Miss Hering for the sake of highlighting an oblique passage in her otherwise perceptive critical writing. But the opinions expressed are the *reductio ad absurdum* of a view indulged by many American writers on ballet. According to this view, what is important is not the choreographer's intention in creating a ballet, but "the dancing" which should express and/or idealise the reality of the performer's (not the ballet's) position in time (historical epoch) and place (nationality).

It is not a new view. In the last century, Imperial Austrian balletomanes were delighted when their ballerinas softened the acrobatic technique imported from Italy to suit their Viennese *gemütlichkeit*, whether it suited the Italian ballets or not. Likewise, alterations in the style of dancing occurred when French ballets were danced in Russia, and today New York City balletomanes demand dancing of the qualities they consider "American classicism" even in old Continental ballets.

The best contemporary statement of this view is by Edwin Denby (3). Mr. Denby is interested in the way in which a company or an indi-

vidual dances. He finds that two general factors determine the dancing—the conscious schooling and the unconscious overtones of the social movements of a particular time and place. A dancer can do little about the unconscious local colour in his style; to develop it, to make it conscious, is to create mannerisms. However, followers of Mr. Denby such as Miss Hering forget that the conscious schooling can be adapted and altered to suit the peculiar demands of a particular ballet. When it is not, it also becomes a type of mannerism, the type which annoys Pierre Michaut (3) when he complains that New York City dancers lack feeling, and Viennese critics (4) when they complain that London dancers lack feeling, and even Miss Hering (2) when she complains that Paris dancers lack feeling. It is the mannerism advocated by the inevitable consequences of the view that "the dancing" is the essence of ballet.

Indeed, "the dancing" is no more the essence of ballet than "the language" is the essence of poetry (as advocated by the so-called "new critics" in literature). Sound critics from Aristotle to Elder Olsen have always realized that such a view is a confusion of ends. To paraphrase Professor Olsen's argument against the new critics (5)—the dancing is both the least and the most important aspect of ballet. It is the most important in so far as it is the major material from which ballets are made; the least important when we consider that unless it is formed by a choreographer to his purposes, there is no ballet.

GEORGE JACKSON

- (1) Ballet Today, April 1956.
- (2) Dance Magazine, August 1956.
- (3) Dance News Annual, 1953. A. A. Knopf, New York City.
- (4) Dance News, January 1955.
- (5) Critics and Criticism, R. S. Crane editor. 1952. The University of Chicago Press.

Hope Sheridan's Report on the

Royal Danish Ballet Season in New York

THE Royal Danish Ballet opened its first American tour with a two weeks engagement at the Metropolitan Opera House. Beyond the curiosity of watching one of the oldest ballet companies in the world, lies the far more fascinating difference in style and approach to dancing. The style is, perhaps, the most pure that we shall ever see for it has been subject to fewer outside influences than that of any other extant company. For this reason, it not only presents an interesting study in the contemporary, but also tells us a great deal about the conditions which existed in Bournonville's time. The style which meets our eye is most likely that of the ancient French "ballet de coeur" upon which has been superimposed Bournonville's influence. The only noticeable differences of form in the company are those that exist between the dancers who were trained before the advent of Vera Volkova and those who were trained afterwards, and examples among the younger dancers which come immediately to mind are Fredbjorn Bjornsson and Henning Kronstam. This difference is certainly not a detracting element for the Danes are strong enough to make everything distinctly their own. It is extremely pleasing to see neat, pointed feet; a great attention to *épaulement*; carefully held hands; well-rounded wrists and arms which are neither broken nor rigid; a consistent accent on and usage of *petite batterie* by the men.

Under the heading of approach to dancing, might fall the Danes' great understanding of the importance of the minor gesture; their complete and devoted loyalty to the concept of each member, be he stage front or stage rear, giving an entire performance, with its ultimate result in the overall artistry of the company. Following closely upon the heels of this concept is the importance of mime and from that, of the emergence of the character ballet as an important part of the repertoire. With the exception of *Graduation Ball* and *Somnambula*, most of what the Danes do is new to western eyes. Even the two pieces, *Petrouchka* and *Chopiniana*, set for them by Fokine himself in the mid-twenties, have differences both in choreography and approach.

Of the two romantic ballets by Bournonville which are exhibited in the repertoire, *La Sylphide* is structurally the strongest as well as the oldest. It is given a straightforward telling and every member of the company devotes to this ballet a performance of loving care. What one is most impressed by in *La Sylphide* is the work done by the company as a whole. This, of course, includes the corps' work. Of the individual performances, Henning Kronstam is outstanding as James and Niels Bjorn Larsen in the role of Madge the fortune teller. I should like to say that I was highly impressed by Margrethe Schanne in the role of *La Sylphide*. While she is unquestionably a fine dancer—a neat, clean one at that—she does not have that light, ethereal, almost quick-silver quality that the role itself demands. There is no suggestion of that mystical elusiveness we imagine when we think of mist-filled fens and grottos. Even though Miss Schanne may not

completely fill the bill, she does give us an honest interpretation that bears the stamp of a sincere artist at work. Henning Kronstam gives excellent support as James and appears to possess a wonderful sense of just what characteristics are most necessary to the romantic hero. If he continues along this line, he should be one of our finest romantic-classic dancers. Passing mention must be made of two excellent solos in the first act by Stanley Williams and Fredbjorn Bjornsson.

Napoli, six years younger than *La Sylphide*, is the other ballet of the romantic period by which Bournonville is represented in the repertoire. It is one of the most popular of the Danes' ballets having received its 400th performance during the run at the Metropolitan Opera House. Set in three acts, it is given over much more to mime than *La Sylphide* and is structurally not as strong. The first act, set on the quay of Santa Lucia in Naples, is devoted almost entirely to the setting of a folk mood as well as the plot of the story and contains only one or two passages of dance. Act 2, set on the famous Blue Grotto of Capri, is once again almost completely mime, containing a short passage of corps' dance and very little solo work. Act 3 is set at a pilgrimage to the Madonna dell'Arco outside Naples. Act 3 resolves itself in a series of folk dances and general festivities. The choreographer has successfully intermixed native folk steps with ballet technique. Dominating the act is one long tarentella which gives the soloists an opportunity to display their individual talents. Of these, Fredbjorn Bjornsson, Henning Kronstam, Kjeld Noack, Anker Orskov and Stanley Williams are outstanding and of the ladies, Inga Sand, Margrethe Schanne, Vivi Thorberg and Kirsten Ralov. In the role of Gennaro, a fisherman who is the central character of the ballet, is Borge Ralov; he makes a fine, strong character of the hero and a very lively one at that. As Teresina, his bride-to-be, Kirsten Ralov gives a commendable performance. *Napoli* has several weak spots but on the whole it is a gay ballet and boasts a charming score by Gade, Helsted, Paulli and a third act finale by Lumbye.

One of the most charming ballets in the Danes' repertoire is also its oldest, called the *Whims of Cupid—and of the Ballet Master*. A ballet-comique in one act by Galeotti with the music by Jens Lolle, it was seen first at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen in 1786 and has always been present in the Danes' repertoire. It is a perfect example of a character ballet and when given a careful performance, such as the Danes give it, it is a very entertaining piece of theatre. Each role is danced and mimed to the hilt. It is impossible to pick favourites since the entire cast gives a first class performance. But those impressions I savour most are the Quaker dance, a beautiful pair of characterizations by Britta Cornelius-Knudsen and Ole Palle Hansen and the two Oldsters' dance by Elise Landsy and Arne Melchert. It is a superb example of 18th century theatre and a gem of a ballet, replete with its finale of farcical mayhem breaking loose on stage.



REYNA FROM PARIS

PARIS recently experienced a rarely beautiful evening of Spanish dances presented by Lola Flores and her company of 22 artists, who have left Spain for the first time and are installed for a two-months' season at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées.

Without being wholly folklore, or still less strictly classical, the whole company dances well, the settings are pretty and the costumes fresh and new are well designed.

There is an alternation of passionate and comic songs and dances and the moving spirit of the show, Lola Flores, half Spanish and half gipsy, gave some impressive solos, notable for beauty of movement and magnificent hands and arms. Faico, her partner—a pure gipsy—has been a real discovery for Paris. Not for a long time have we seen dancing of such fire, precision and sustained violence.

The Parisian ballet critics received coldly—one might say with unanimous indignation—the Ballet de Paris Revue presented at the Théâtre de Paris by Roland Petit and Zizi Jeanmaire. The show consists of a variety of different numbers thrown together with *Valentine, or the Magic Bicycle*—a story in several scenes which takes place during a tour of France. Zizi Jeanmaire, with her Parisian toughness and her accent of the faubourgs, is amusing at times, but that is not enough to reach the standard of great music hall Roland Petit really was trying to create on this occasion. Considered as a revue, the show is a flop.

Roland Petit reacted to the general astonishment and discontent by replacing some of the tableaux in his Revue with some scenes from his old ballets—the chamber scene from *Carmen* for instance, at every performance of which Roland Petit and Zizi Jeanmaire score a triumph. Jeanmaire, thinned down, has retained her wonderful line and the *Carmen* scene alone would justify her move to the Théâtre de Paris.

The Revue itself oscillates between literary pretension and the most blatant vulgarity. It is a pity when an artist like Roland Petit presents such ineptitudes, which sometimes seem to belong to the students' theatre.

After having resigned from the Opéra, and going to London to see the Soviet Ballet, Serge Lifar came back to Paris and withdrew his resignation—and Mr. Hirsch, the Director of the Opera, has readmitted him. There is really very little continuity in M. Lifar's ideas.

On 11th October Serge Lido signed his Album No. 6 at Mme. Gilberte Cournand's pleasant Dance Library in Place Dauphine. A group of stars—Lyane Daydé, Nina Vyroubova, Michel Renault etc. were present and many friends, critics and artistes joined in the function. As usual, Mme. Cournand's shop was too small to hold the crowd which overflowed on the pavement and into the Place. But it didn't matter—the Place Dauphine is one of those rare spots where there is no traffic to speak of, and they could have gone in for square dancing!

RENE GERBAULT FROM BELGIUM

EVEN when it is sunk deep in mediocrity, a corps de ballet can be improved and eventually transformed into an excellent company, on condition that it has as maître de ballet someone as self-willed as he is artistic. Such a one is the Frenchman Joseph Lazzini, whose Company has had its first season at the Théâtre Royal in Liège. This Franco-Belgian company has proved itself capable of executing such works as *Les Sylphides* and *Petrouchka*. The star, Alberte Clauzier, an expressive Algerian is brilliant in very varied genres and made a perfect *Black Swan* in the solo role, but that is by the way, I wish to present here the choreographer Lazzini.

I do not say that he is always perfect, but he does combine a profound sense of life and originality with eclectic science. His main characteristic is a great variety of inspiration and technique. His *Rainbow* (*Symphonie en Ut*, by Georges Bizet) is a sort of hymn to the sun and light, the mother of colours—the work of a man fascinated by natural phenomena. By contrast, *Spleen*, a sensual tragic pas de deux (music by Marcel Peyssies of Monte Carlo) takes place within the confines of a room in which a drugged neurotic dreams of caresses. *The Accursed Huntsman* (music by César Franck) displays a whole herd of deer on the stage.

So much for diversity of inspiration; now for technical attainments. *The Prisoner* (music by Berthe Di Vito-Delvaux) frames an erotic scene in pure neo-classic style within two expressionist passages. First there is a rhythmic march of prisoners in a grey court, which suddenly is transformed into a room where two lovers are quarrelling. This is the passage—a little long, incidentally—which is neo-classic. After an adagio in which the man eventually kills the woman in a fit of jealousy, the expressionist style gains the upper hand. At dawn the man awakes in his prison—the hour of execution draws near.

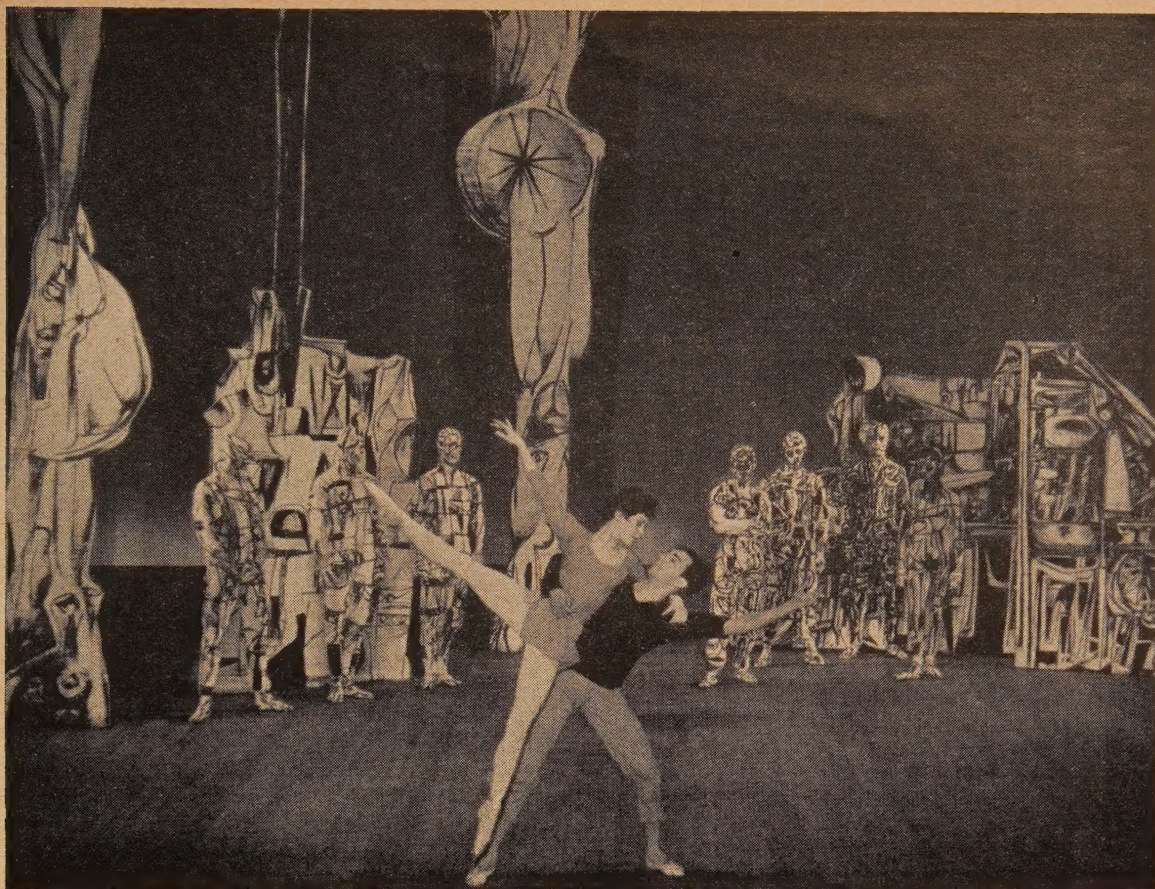
Let me say straight away that the juxtaposition of two styles did arouse some criticism, but still, in my opinion, the unity of the work was maintained by its general atmosphere, reinforced by the colours of the setting and lighting and by the repeated apparition of black demons symbolised by the dancers.

There is something unexpectedly new in *Romeo and Juliet* (music by Tchaikovsky). Here Lazzini has created a neo-classic choreography of the utmost refinement for the principal characters, and often makes the dancers stand completely motionless in a simple but tasteful setting. The ball scene treated in this way becomes mysterious, charged with a strange beauty.

For contrast again *Odes des Ruines* (woven round Tchaikovsky's piano Concerto No. 1) is a perpetual negation of simplicity. I believe that this incredibly rich choreography would be impossible to write down, even in Labanotation. Happily, it has been filmed. There is very little story, spectres in sumptuous robes, or in long green and rust tutus move about in a somewhat surrealist setting of ruins and blackened trees. Strange flights by long jetées—the length of the cycloramic screen, furtive disappearances; files of dancers rapidly crossing each other in the pale light; all these are to be found in this masterly, intensely poetic, production.

In my opinion this young choreographer has shewn that he can open new roads to Continental dancing. He is dominated by a passion for research, and I believe he has his own brand of choreographic genius. I am not alone amongst the critics in thinking so

Above: Alberte Clauzier in Joseph Lazzini's new production of *Coppelia*, performed at the Royal Theatre of Liège.



HOW A BALLET IS BORN

WOLFGANG
BRUNNER

SPECIAL BALLET TODAY
Interview by
ELISABETHE CORATHIEL



UNTIL this year, Wolfgang Brunner has been a practically unknown quantity in the English Ballet world—recognised, that is to say, as a capable dancer, but one whose creative faculties evoked scarcely a shadow of speculation in passing.

When he suddenly emerged as the choreographer of this season's Festival Ballet novelty, *Les Deux Errants*, the vast majority of the general public became aware of his wider capabilities for the first time. And the critics argued heatedly over him. Whatever they thought of the new ballet as such, they recognised in the young choreographer a mind alert and receptive to contemporary impressions. An adventurous spirit that must be reckoned with in future.

The fact that Wolfgang Brunner has not been "discovered" in this country much earlier reflects a remnant of insularity on the part of British ballet-lovers, for *Les Deux Errants* is actually not a new work. It was presented with considerable success on the Continent some time before it came here, and the interest it evoked should at least have given rise to some anticipatory debate. Instead, the reception here produced no great excitement. Continental critics gave it credit for far more originality than most of their English colleagues were able to detect. Which goes to prove that there is still a vast difference between the English and the continental attitude towards the choreographic art.

Mr. Brunner's ambition to break new ground springs directly from his continental outlook. It may not be altogether in tune with traditional English ideas, but that makes his thought-processes all the more arresting.

Wolfgang Brunner, a British subject and actually London-born, had the inestimable advantage of accompanying his parents to Switzerland when he was quite a child, and he received the whole of his education in Basle during the exciting period when this great city, an oasis of peace on neutral soil in a world-at-war, was the intellectual meeting-place for every shade of cultural activity during the first half of the 1940's. Here he spent the most formative years of his life, and his Swiss upbringing left an indelible mark upon his mental outlook.

His career as a dancer started late—after he had already qualified for a business career as a commercial correspondent and translator.

This useful office-training has stood him in good stead. He is drilled to system, and has an exceptionally tidy mind!

"In Switzerland," he told me, "parents never take children to the theatre while they are very young. Youngsters are encouraged to wait until they are old enough to appreciate the mental stimulus a performance offers. Personally, I came to ballet via drama, at an age when I was sufficiently developed to react to its impact sensitively. My most intense intellectual enjoyment is still derived from drama, but that of course does not rule out drama expressed wordlessly, in pure movement, and that is my ideal of what a ballet should be."

"Like all Swiss boys I was well up in athletics—skating, ski-ing and so on had given me an adequate preparation for a dancing career as far as physique went—only unfortunately the muscle developments were in the wrong places! That, however, was no great hindrance. It merely meant that I had to work a little harder to overcome old habits of movement."

"No doubt music came to your aid?" I asked.

"Actually, I am not a trained musician," replied Mr. Brunner. "That is perhaps unfortunate, but it is not insurmountable. In fact I am inclined to think it an advantage in some respects. At any rate I have no difficulty in explaining to a composer exactly what I want, when I am creating a new ballet, and the approach, if unorthodox, is at any rate completely fresh. Music should be subject to the choreographer's design, and unless the design comes first, its superior claims are not easily established. In *Les Deux Errants* everything hinges upon the design, which even goes so far as to incorporate decor, the background being practically bare, and the dancers, with the aid of their specially devised costumes, actually building up a kaleidoscopic suggestion of scenery as the ballet proceeds."

"London critics inclined to speak of *Les Deux Errants* as if it were a somewhat trifling affair, but that was not the way in which the Continental critics reacted to it. Their evaluation penetrated deeper. As a matter of fact, far from being a bagatelle thrown off in a sudden flush of inspiration, this ballet took me two years to create."

Wolfgang Brunner's approach to ballet is in principle very similar to that of Roland Petit, in whose company he spent the happiest years

of his dancing career, and for whose methods he has the highest admiration. Like Petit he feels that modern choreography must reflect contemporary thought as expressed in movement; and, also like Petit, he is an ardent advocate of simplicity—of cutting down to the bare essentials whatever it is he wishes to convey.

Les Deux Errants was inspired by a poem of Christian Morgenstern's called *Der Wanderer*. Pondering the text, Brunner perceived many different shades of meaning. The ballet represents his personal reactions. He emphasises that the audience is equally free to use its own imagination, the main purpose being to evoke emotions and moods. That is why he has set the ballet in abstract surroundings. When he met the American painter Dan Snyder in Paris he knew at once that he had found someone who could put over this idea in a theatrically effective way. Composer Bill Russo was the next link, and when Director Braunschweig handed Wolfgang Brunner the empty stage—delicious but frightening moment!—the experiment could begin.

"The art of modern ballet," he says, "is an art of elimination. Ideas must be clarified until everything superfluous has been cut adrift. That means reducing and reducing, until one arrives at the abstract. Of course it also demands superlative technique on the part of the dancers.

"People often deplore the fact that modern choreographers—so they say—cannot create full-length ballets. That is not true. Choreographers can be as inventive as they ever were, but their creative powers are conditioned by finance and opportunity. Risks involved are incalculable, so that, when a company's resources permit it to hazard a full-length ballet, the temptation is to play safe by revising a classic. Personally, I like small ballets, but I see no reason, apart from economic necessity, why there should not be full-length works, quite modern in feeling and treatment.

"Of course, we must decide what we mean by modern. Streamlined slickness, yes; but to be 'modern', I do not feel that the theme has to be obnoxious, which it often is. Modernity is a matter of appeal and viewpoint—when atmosphere, colour and movement are in harmony. You can trace the same trend in modern architecture, in furnishings; by an inner instinct born of our own time, we know automatically when a certain combination of lines, colours and rhythms is *right* according to our present way of thinking. Analyse it, and you will find that the contemporary trend is always towards abstraction, harmonious simplicity. In my ballets the steps are always classical—but it is not the steps alone that count. Not the steps by themselves, not the music by itself, not the decor by itself or the choreography by itself, but a happy combination of all these essential elements makes the perfect modern ballet."



Photos: On page 9 *Les Deux Errants*. The costumes of dancers and grouping provide scenic effects.

Above: Wolfgang Brunner. Both photos by Ken Ross-Mackenzie

CAREERS IN PICTURES

This month's story of Belinda Wright is the fourth in this series. Other famous stars will be featured as often as we have sufficient space available.

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Beryl Grey	Sept. 1956
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Belinda Wright	(this issue)

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NEXT MONTH

A Year in the Life of a Ballerina

Alicia Markova has travelled many thousands of miles during 1956. In our next issue (Jan./Feb. combined) we depict her year in story and pictures, and publish new portraits taken specially for *Ballet Today*.

Also: an exclusive interview with ANTON DOLIN.

BELINDA WRIGHT

CAREERS IN VICTUOUS





CAREERS IN PICTURES

BELINDA WRIGHT commenced her dancing career in her native Southport, where she was discovered by Madame Rambert. Her first important role was with John Gilpin in the *Blue Bird* pas de deux. Since then she has danced in many countries abroad—Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A., Canada, France, Spain, Italy, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Egypt, North Africa, Belgium, Lebanon and Israel. She still thinks British audiences are the warmest and kindest, but finds Italy and Spain are extremely stimulating artistically.

When Margot Fonteyn was ill, Belinda was given the opportunity of dancing in the *Vision of Marguerite*, which had been created by Frederick Ashton for Fonteyn, and this has remained her favourite ballet, whilst the role of Agathe in *Les Demoiselles de la Nuit* is her favourite part.

John Gilpin has partnered Belinda most frequently, but she has danced with many other excellent male dancers and her great

ambition is to appear in many more contemporary modern works, especially those of her husband, Wolfgang Brunner, for whose inventive genius she has a great admiration. She also loves acting, and if she had to choose a career other than ballet she would like to be a dramatic actress.

Wherever Belinda happens to be she likes to make a home, and recently with the aid of her husband she has made over a delightful Hampstead studio, for she is especially good at decorating. To complete the home Belinda must have a cat, and *Nuisance*—a ginger-black-and-white is now installed as a member of the household.

Belinda is a great favourite with London and provincial audiences to whom she is no stranger. The Festival Ballet Company are doing great work in the provinces, where the people are almost starved of ballet throughout the year, and the out-of-London audiences are quick to respond and appreciate the charm and intelligence of Belinda's interpretation of so many varied roles.



WRIGHT

... ROLES DANCED ...

With Ballet Rambert

Mrs. Tebrick in Lady into Fox
Young Girl in Jardin aux Lilas
French Ballerina and The Mermaid in The Mermaid
Hebi in The Descent of Hebi
The Younger Sister in The Fugitive
Blue Bird Pas de Deux

With Ballet de Paris de Roland Petit

Gipsy Girl in Carmen
Leading Girl in Musical Chairs
Lovers in Les Rendezvous
Agathe in Les Demoiselles de la Nuit
Sleeping Beauty in Les Forains

Other Companies

Tarasiana
Pas de Trois
Le Lien
Harlequinade

With Festival Ballet

Odette in Swan Lake
Valse, Prelude, Mazurka and Pas de Deux
in Les Sylphides
Snow Queen and Sugar Plum Fairy in Casse-Noisette
Marguerite in Vision of Marguerite
Concerto Grosso
4th Movement of Symphonic Impressions
3rd Movement in Symphony for Fun
Fleur de Lys in Esmeralda
Alice in Alice in Wonderland
Cerito and Grisi in Pas de Quatre
Giselle
The Girl in Les Deux Errants
Swanilda in Coppelia
The Girl in Spectre de la Rose
Ballerina in Etudes

Photos: Page 11 in Vision of Marguerite. These pages, l./r. in Giselle (photo Mike Davis), as Swanilda in Coppelia (Roy Round) with John Gilpin in Swan Lake and Casse-Noisette, as Alice in Alice in Wonderland.



These charming childhood studies of Belinda Wright shew that at a very early age she was already destined to become a dancer. The first photograph on this page was taken when she was four years of age, the last when she was seven. In the latter she is the smallest ballet dancer on the right of the picture, and is holding a cup presented by Anton Dolin at the Annual Dance Festival held at Lytham St. Annes. Miss Alicia Cottrell (seen on the extreme left of the picture) was the Adjudicator at this Festival, and predicted then that Belinda had all the potential qualities of a ballerina.



Why not join a Club?

By
David Benn

There are over fifty ballet clubs in Great Britain, but many readers do not know of their existence. In this series we hope to give details of their activities and aims. We commence this feature with an article on the Association which is doing so much to weld these Clubs together.

EVERY year ballet schools up and down the country turn out thousands of potential dancers. Only a fraction of these will ever make the grade in a professional company.

Others, either because they are, wisely so, unwilling to exchange a stable career for a very unstable one, or for a host of other reasons, must limit their activities in ballet to their spare time. It is for these people that the Association of Ballet Clubs seeks to cater.

Under the guidance of the Chairman, Mr. G. B. L. Wilson and the Secretary, Miss Christine Greenfield, some fifty clubs have been welded together. A regularly published news letter enables the clubs to know what others are doing and Miss Greenfield takes every opportunity to put clubs in touch with each other.

Naturally inter-visiting among the clubs would be highly desirable but the difficulties involved in long journeys, to say nothing of the more down to earth business of getting time off, can hardly be overstressed.

I very much doubt if ballet lovers can possibly realise the limitations under which the Association works; yet within these limitations it works wonders.

Firstly the officers of the Association are themselves doing this in their spare time, although the running of any club or movement on a nation-wide basis involves a tremendous amount of work and correspondence.

Yet it is the correspondence which is the one way of keeping in touch with the clubs. To visit them all would be almost impossible. The expense of having a travelling secretary would be so colossal as to make the idea quite unthinkable.

So, the main chance for affiliated clubs to get together in London comes at the twice yearly General Meeting. Here every effort is made to combine business with pleasure.

Naturally club members are anxious to see and meet the leading personalities in the ballet world and often a word in the right ear from Mr. Wilson has had the desired effect of obtaining their services for a lecture or a demonstration. But even here the limitations are legion. To send a speaker from London will cost a return train fare and in most cases a night's accommodation. And the majority of clubs just cannot do it. Add to this the fact that the people themselves can often not afford two days to visit a club, much as most of them would like to, and we begin to realise just what the provincial ballet club is up against.

Naturally most of the dancers want to produce ballets and to this end they do not spare themselves. There are not a few members who have worked all through the night to prepare the stage for the next day's show because they have access to the theatre only some twenty-four hours beforehand. It is through the ballet clubs that a hitherto unheard of entity has appeared—the amateur choreographer. The professional market for ballet scenarios is practically non-existent but it would be very unusual for a ballet club not to receive with

open arms a good idea for an original ballet. Some clubs try to engage professional choreographers but, on the whole, the expense of this alone is a deterrent and naturally most clubs prefer to draw from their own talent.

Nor are their efforts unnoticed. The best of the items are seen and included in the Association's bi-annual show "Evening of Ballet." Here the provincial dancer or choreographer has the chance to show what he or she can do as an amateur.

Mr. Wilson himself assures me that this is in no way a "shop window" for would be professionals. "Of course" he points out, "the critics are there. But no one can hope to make a professional choreographer who has not had years of experience with a professional company. As for the dancers; some possibly do get their opportunity through the ballet clubs but, even if it were not for that, the dancer with sufficient talent would still be noticed, if nothing else by the examiners; our main concern is to provide a means of relaxation for those who dance in their spare time."

Of course the size of the clubs varies. Some prefer to limit their numbers by audition or by stipulating a certain qualification, such as the Elementary Certificate of the R.A.D. and nearly all of them set a lower age limit. But the majority of clubs are only too pleased to have anyone who can tell a glissade from a pirouette. Indeed interest, and willingness to wield a hammer, a paintbrush or a needle and cotton are often quite adequate credentials for a welcome.

And they are well worth supporting. It is quite erroneous to assume that they are mere cliques of would-be dancers. Struggling against terrific odds, the worst of which seems to be lack of support, often on stages too small to do their work justice, and with the show itself inadequately publicised because of the colossal expense involved in publicity, they do make every effort to keep the interest in ballet alive in the provinces and provide some sort of ballet entertainment between the visits of the professional companies.

Now such summer as we have had is over, clubs are beginning to prepare for their shows. I hope readers will make every effort to get to know when and where these are to be held and make a point of showing these hard working people that their efforts are appreciated. At a time when the interest in ballet is rising sufficiently for there to be ballet all the year round in London and for an odd week or so in most of the provinces, and scope for several national publications on the subject, it seems surprising that any club should have difficulty in getting more than adequate support.

With this article we publish a list of ballet clubs in Great Britain. If you are interested write to the Secretary at your nearest Club.

Note for Club Secretaries:

It would be a great help if club secretaries would advise us well in advance when and where their activities are to take place and include a few notes on how to get there. As far as space will permit we will try to print these provided they are sent in in ample time before going to press.

LIST OF BALLET CLUBS

ANDOVER B.C. Mrs. E. L. C. Speller, 23 Dunmow Road, Andover, Hants.

BELFAST B.C. Miss June North, "Glenview" Wolfhill Avenue, Ligoniel, Belfast.

BOSTON ARTS & CRAFTS SOCIETY. Mrs. G. Lancaster, 13 Pilgrim Road, Boston, Lincs.

BOURNEMOUTH B.C. Miss Diane Gulliford, 55 Nortoft Road, Bournemouth.

BRISTOL B.C. Mrs. E. G. Moorby, 5/22 Tyndalls Park Road, Bristol, 8.

BURNLEY & DISTRICT B.C. Mrs. K. M. Lawson, 131 Casterton Avenue, Burnley, Lancs.

BURTON-ON-TRENT, ST. MODWEN'S BALLET. Mrs. H. W. Lake, 11 Balmoral Road, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY B.C. Michael Ludgate Esq., Jesus College, Cambridge.

CHELMSFORD BALLET COMPANY. Miss Peggy Bedwell, 7 Tyrells Close, Springfield Road, Chelmsford, Essex.

CHICHESTER B.C. Mrs. K. Morton Sale, 7 Barford Road, Chichester, Sussex.

CIRENCESTER & DISTRICT B.C. Mrs. J. Walker, Perrotts Brook, Cirencester, Glos.

CITY OF COVENTRY TRAINING COLLEGE B.C. City of Coventry T.C., Charter Avenue, Coventry.

JANET CRANMORE B.C. Miss Janet Cranmore, 154 Hagley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.

DANISH BALLET CLUB. Borge Fabricius, Gl. Torv 14, Copenhagen K.

DOVER B.C. Miss Eileen Thomas, 9 Queens Gate Road, Ramsgate, Kent.

DUBLIN THEATRE B.C. Mme. Violetta Morosini-Whelan, 6a Henry Street, Dublin, Eire.

EDINBURGH BALLET THEATRE. Miss Agnes Bertram, 16 Grosvenor Crescent, Edinburgh, Scotland.

ENFIELD BALLET THEATRE CLUB. Miss B. M. Page, 145 Albany Park Avenue, Enfield, Middlesex.

FURNESS B.C. Mrs. P. Killiner, 54 Fairfield Lane, Barrow-in-Furness.

GLASGOW B.C. Miss Isobel Smith, 16 Crown Terrace, Glasgow, W.2., Scotland.

(continued on page 21)

New Recordings

Reviewed by
BEDFORD CROWLE



Your record collecting ballet friends would be delighted to find any one of the records from this month's selection in their Christmas stocking. They are all of a high standard and cover a wide field of music so that many tastes can be satisfied. If however the simplest, and incidentally the cheapest form of present is needed, then I think the attractively produced E.M.I. booklet, *Nights at the Ballet*, with its Degas cover (price 1/-), is a useful suggestion. It includes a list of recordings of music used in more than 140 ballets, interspersed with informative articles by Pigeon Crowle and a number of excellent photographs. It is interesting to old-stagers and, of course, in particular to newcomers to ballet.

DAPHNIS AND CHLOE (Ravel). *Boston S.O. (Munch).* HMV. ALP 1374.

It would be difficult to criticise this disc—Ravel's most enchanting music, played by a finely disciplined orchestra under that excellent conductor of French music, Charles Munch. All this is topped by an amazingly clear and full recording. You just can't go wrong. Nevertheless I do not forget how fond I have grown of Ansermet's beautiful performance LXT 2775.

APOLLO MUSAGETES AND RENARD (Stravinsky). *Suisse Romande Orchestra (Ansermet) and soloists.* Decca LXT 5169.

Ansermet never fails one when it concerns Stravinsky—they have known each other so long and with such understanding. Both these ballets were danced with great success by Diaghilev's company and are good contrasts as a coupling. The soloists in *Renard*—first appearance on LP—completely surmount its difficulties. A first class Christmas present for followers of this composer.

THE SOLDIER'S TALE (Stravinsky). *R. Helpmann, T. Longdon, A. Nicholls and a Chamber Ensemble (Pritchard).* HMV. ALP 1377.

Those who saw this last year at the Edinburgh Festival and enjoyed it, need go no further—this is the record for them as it captures everything that those absorbing performances had to give. At least, nearly everything as unfortunately Moira Shearer's beauty and her superb dancing and miming cannot be included.

PIANO CONCERTOS NO. 1 AND 2 (Mendelssohn). *P. Katin (piano), L.S.O. (Collins).* Decca LXT 5201.

Not by any means Mendelssohn's greatest works but there is a lot of pleasant listening to be had from them, particularly from the Second Concerto. This was choreographed by Sylvia Hamer, while William Dollar successfully used the First for Ballet Theatre Workshop. Pianist, orchestra and conductor are all to be congratulated on the thought and artistry they have put into this well recorded disc.

BEETHOVEN'S SEVENTH SYMPHONY. *Philharmonia Orchestra (Klemperer).* Columbia 33 CX 1379.

Following hard on the heels of a great Eroica, Klemperer gives another superb performance—this time the work that Massine set to his third symphonic ballet of the thirties. Everything about this record calls for superlatives and each one can be said with complete sincerity. The clarity and tone of the recording is amazing and enables you to appreciate to the full some of the Philharmonia's finest playing.

DANZAS ESPANOLAS (Granados). *Gonzalo Soriano (piano)* London DTL 93101.

I thoroughly enjoyed Alicia de Larrocha's performance, AXTL 1072, of these dances, which should form a part of everyone's library. However this new record must be considered very seriously as I feel that Soriano's sensitivity just gains first place and the recorded tone is superior.

DOUBLE VIOLIN CONCERTO IN D MINOR, VIOLIN CONCERTO IN E AND SARABANDE (Bach). *L. Kogan and E. Gilels (violins), Philharmonia Orchestra (Ackermann).* Columbia 33 CX 1373.

The Double Concerto is the music of Balanchine's well known ballet, *Concerto Barocco*, and for me, this is the disc to have. The teamwork of the two violinists shows sincere sympathy for the work and each other, while their tone is really beautiful. I must, however, mention that the second movement could with advantage have been taken more slowly. Leonid Kogan plays the other two pieces exquisitely.

BRAHMS' FOURTH SYMPHONY. *Philharmonia Orchestra (Karajan), Columbia 33 CX 1362 and V.P.O. (Kubelik), Decca LXT 5214.*

The music of Massine's world-famous ballet, *Choreatium*, here presents me with a severe problem—both are very good and stand well above their rivals. Kubelik's opening movement is slightly faster which could be more to your taste, whereas Karajan's scherzo is more gay. The Philharmonia's playing is better but Decca's recording is perhaps rounder. For me, Columbia has it but you must decide for yourself.

One evening, during the Dolmetsch Festival, I slipped down to Haslemere to see their presentation of Elizabethan dances, given with great simplicity and charm by the family and friends including an ex-member of the Wells. The idea was to assist a greater understanding of the music of the period and in my opinion was wholly successful. It therefore gives me great pleasure to recommend to you two Oiseau-Lyre records, *Dances of Shakespeare's Time*, OL 50127, and *Jacobean Consort Music*, OL 50133, the authenticity of which is ensured by Thurston Dart's editing and conducting. Do not lightly pass them by.

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New Books

Reviewed by
PIGEON CROWLE

Ballet Annual No. 11. Ed. A. Haskell. (A. & C. Black, 25s.)

A year ago when on a visit to Knole with some American ballet friends, we studied the statue of La Baccelli—a graceful and elegant masterpiece—which is placed at the foot of the staircase, and regretted that we knew so little of this lovely Italian, mistress of the Earl of Dorset, who reigned at the Paris Opera, the King's Theatre, and at Knole in the 18th century. So I was delighted to find a most interesting article on her by Ivor Guest in this year's Annual. It is one of several contributed by various well-known authorities on ballet, including Georges Auric's recollections of the Diaghilev company when, as a boy of fifteen, he first experienced the magical world of the Ballets Russes; and an account by Ninette de Valois of the progress of English male dancing. The male dancer in this country is coming into his own, and she foresees a future in which he will return to his old supremacy. Ballet can now offer him a lifelong career as dancer and later as maître de ballet—the vacancies for the latter position exceed the supply. A gratifying state of affairs for which we have to thank Dame Ninette.

There is also the mixture as before—news from abroad, from Europe, America and Australia; various useful statistical lists; and reports of the activities of English and visiting companies. But not always the full report the index states. In *La Péri*, for instance, no mention is made at all of Fonteyn who exhibited in this ballet a new facet of her remarkable art. The end-papers of Ballet Annual are always distinctive and now we have a charming design of bouquets and great occasions. There are the usual excellent and varied illustrations. Once again, I must turn to Knole and to the reproduction of a painting that is really exciting. Here Gainsborough with his light and inspired touch shows us how a gifted dancer of the period looked in movement and in style, and obliterates from one's mind all the stiff little engravings of the time that are so puppet-like. La Baccelli had the delicate style of beauty, reminiscent of the Linleys, that Gainsborough loved to paint and, pointing her foot with its dancer's instep and swirling her skirt, the dancer tilts her charming head and smiles a little wistfully. She is posed against a background of trees at Knole, but might be at Covent Garden today.

Ballet Decade. Ed. A. Haskell. (25s.)

A record of the past ten years during which ballet has experienced a growth and popularity unparalleled in the history of the Art. Here are some of the most outstanding of the articles and photography from the first ten issues of the Annual and four colour plates taken from the cover designs. A "cautious prophecy" written by P. W. Manchester in 1950 on the English male dancer is fulfilled in the article by de Valois mentioned above in my review of the Annual.

A Decade of Dance. By Walter Strate. (Kamin Publishers, New York, \$5.)

The photographs in this book are all interesting, many are unusual, and some are exciting. The range includes Ram Gopal, Azuma Kabuki Dancers, Roland Petit and Classical Ballet and a number of dancers and dances not yet seen in this country. Though the pictures are grainy and often lacking in clarity, this gives an impressionistic effect that enhances rather than detracts from the feeling of continuity in movement that is their characteristic, while Strate's ability to capture the fleeting moment of emotion or experience is exceptional. Among the more static poses there is a remarkable shot of Letitia Ide, Goyaesque and dramatic. John Martin has written the introduction and the photographs are captioned by quotations from poems by Eliot, Lorca and others. This I often found somewhat precious.



Bolshoi Theatre Ballet. By Y. Slomensky. (Central Books, London 8s. 6d.)

This book differs from other recent publications on the subject in that it gives us something of the history of the Bolshoi Ballet. Although most ballet-lovers worth the name know something of the evolution of the great tradition of Russian ballet, it is inescapably linked with the glories of the Maryinsky and St. Petersburg period. These splendours overshadowed the sister company at Moscow. In actual fact the Bolshoi has an old and great tradition dating from 1773 when the Trustees of the Moscow Orphanage decided to set up a ballet class for their charges. This scheme was so successful that some of the pupils became soloists and eventually went to St. Petersburg, others were the nucleus of a permanent company in Moscow. In this way the orphanage on the banks of the Moskva, facing the Kremlin, became the cradle of ballet training in Moscow.

There are also analytical sections on dancers, choreographers, and repertoire. Very wisely, there is little or no actual political propaganda, but I found the sententious and rather high-flown expatiating on aims and aspirations rather irksome. In the final count these are, as we have seen for ourselves during the recent visit of this great company, those of all true artists—to give of their highest.

The book is well illustrated with many photographs and drawings, including four colour plates.

Books received to be reviewed next month :—

Benesh Dance Notation	—	Rudolf and Joan Benesh	—	10/6d.
The Birth of Ballets-Russes	—	Prince Peter Lieven	—	30/-
Guide to Dance Periodicals	—	S. Yancey Belknap	—	\$7.50
Svetlana Beriosova	—	Cyril Swinson	—	6/6d.

Meet our Contributors

BEDFORD and PIGEON CROWLE, a talented brother and sister combination, who between them have made the Book and Record Review pages of BALLET TODAY an accurate and unbiassed guide to the best of both fields. Pigeon is herself the author of many best sellers. No first night would be complete without Pigeon and "Bun" backstage—they have followed the Sadler's Wells Ballet for the past twenty-two years, and number many of the stars amongst their closest friends. (Photos opposite page and above)

Music

IRRESISTIBLE Strauss
(Johann and Josef Strauss)
The Gypsy Baron, Overture;
Delirium, Waltz;
Artist's Life, Waltz;
Emperor, Waltz;
Pizzicato, Polka;
Blue Danube, Waltz
33CX1393

for Christmas

Operatic Ballet Music

"Aida"—Verdi (Act 2):
Ballet Music;
"Khovantschina"—Moussorgsky,
orch. Rimsky-Korsakov:
Dances of the Persian Slaves;
"Prince Igor"—Borodin,
orch. Rimsky-Korsakov & Glazounov:
(Act 2, No. 8)—Dance of the Polovtsian Maidens;
(Act 2, No. 17)—Polovtsian Dances;
"Gioconda"—Ponchielli (Act 2):
Dance of the Hours;
"Tannhäuser"—Wagner (Act 1);
Venusberg Music
33CX1327

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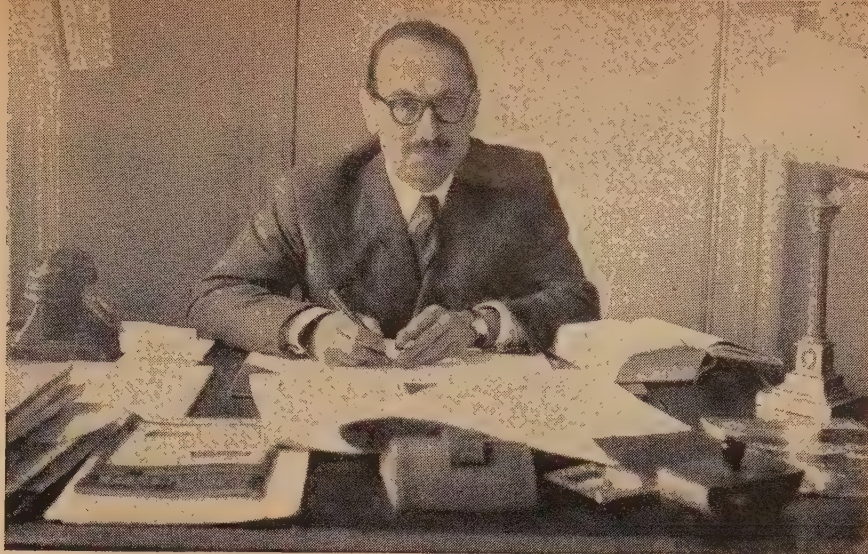
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MONTAGUE CALMAN'S 1956 BALLET A.B.C.



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|----------|---------------------------------|--|----------|-----------------------|--|
| A | for ANTONIO | the vest pocket suave savage; the world's greatest Spanish dancer; a brilliant mime, and as A. Ruiz a not so great composer. | O | for ORCHESTRAS, | 'unseen at ballets but a vital part of the performance. |
| B | for "BLOOD WEDDING" | a nerve tingling score for the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet by the medico - turned - composer Denis ApIvor. | P | for PURGATORY | or the place where I shall land listening all day to recordings of " Sylvia " and " Giselle ". |
| C | for CONDUCTOR | —especially the Bolshoi Ballet ones who showed us how to co-ordinate dancers and orchestra. | Q | for QUEST | in search of vitality, enthusiasm and professionalism in all I have to criticise. |
| D | for DEACON, | the principal clarinetist at the Sadler's Wells Theatre whose lively playing in "Cafe des Sport" earned my praise. | R | for ROYAL OPERA HOUSE | where I have spent many enthralling and some excruciating evenings. |
| E | for ENGLISH FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL | where I found enthusiasm, freshness and vitality. | S | for "SOLITAIRE " | a new Sadler's Wells Theatre ballet with Malcolm Arnold's tuneful " Suite of English Dances ' woven into the score. |
| F | for DE FALLA | and his throbbingly exciting magician's brew "El Amor Brujo ". | T | for TAYLOR | the overworked leader of the Royal Opera House Orchestra—a hardworking and often under-rehearsed band of fine musicians. |
| G | for GADOULKAS | —an early type of pear-shaped viol played by the Bulgarian State Song and Dance Company on their visit to London. | U | for UNEXPECTED | —those pleasures I get ' from the little advertised and barely publicised moments at the Sadler's Wells Theatre. |
| H | for "HOMAGE TO THE QUEEN" | with Malcolm Arnold's flowing music. | V | for VERDI | whose music is ill-treated in the ballet " Lady And The Fool ". |
| I | for IRVING, | musical adviser to the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company based at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. | W | for " WHY | did principal Royal Opera House conductor George Weldon vanish from the scene so suddenly ? " |
| J | for JEERS | some orchestral playing justifiably earns. | X | for XMAS | and my most sincere greetings to readers, dancers and musicians everywhere. |
| K | for KOREN | the Mercutio in the Bolshoi Ballet's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> . He danced the only piece well served by Prokofiev's music. | Y | for YU-EH-CH'IN, | a four stringed moon-shaped guitar used by the Peking Opera during their stimulating season of dance and song. |
| L | for LAC DES CYGNES | which has to figure in every ballet repertoire; it has also the finest ballet music ever written. | Z | for ZHDANOV, | the great Bolshoi dancer whose movements , were eloquently musical and athletically graceful. |
| M | for MEYERBEER | whose colourless music for " Les Patineurs " does not interfere with my enjoyment of the sparkling dances. | | | |
| N | for "NOCTAMBULES" | with its fine Humphrey Searle score—a new exciting ballet at Covent Garden. | | | |

Meet our Contributors

MONTAGUE CALMAN. Aged 38 he struggled for the first 18 years of his life to be a writer. Then a short period of journalism. Followed by a war lifetime of army service when he wrote many nasty letters to M.P.'s Since 1946 has written on entertainment in American and British publications. In England his views on ballet are expressed in a national evening paper, syndicated features, two glossy magazines in the provinces, and **BALLET TODAY**.

He enjoys life and does not want to be a dock-labourer, an M.P., a tycoon or a royal dress designer. (Photo above)

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In my postbag

A letter from Alan Carter with the welcome news that he is now fully recovered, and saying that he is glad he is not forgotten in England.

Because readers wrote in asking for news of Mr. Carter's work, Elisabeth Corathiel went out to Munich to interview him, only to be met with the sad news that he was in hospital. We did not disclose this fact at the time because we felt it would cause pain and anxiety to Mr. Carter's relatives and many friends. The report on his work appeared in our September edition.

"For some time now" writes Christina Munoz from Mexico "I have wanted to write and express my liking for your magazine. Ballet Today seems to have a little of everything and is nicely balanced. One of my favourite sections is *Careers in Pictures*. A ballerina is usually considered a being apart, but when she goes home she is as normal as any of us, and it is very nice to see her in her own environment, even if it is only in pictures, for we can never get nearer to them than that. I have only one criticism to make, and that is we do not get any long articles on Toumanova. Free-lance dancers should be written about, they travel, take the reader elsewhere, and are stimulating."

*Thank you Miss Munoz. I have always tried to avoid writing only of dancers in companies, or of the home-grown variety. Wherever and whenever I hear of activity in ballet it receives a notice, as often as space permits, although I think you will agree that Ballet Today has the widest foreign news coverage of any dance magazine, there are still more links in the chain to be forged before we get news of every event, but your letter has brought to a head an idea I have been thinking around. Everyone wants to read about their favourite dancer, well here is the chance to vote for them. Fill up the coupon at the foot of the *Careers in Pictures* advertisement on page 10 and send to me. The dancers with the most votes from readers will then be featured in *Careers in Pictures* and *Men in Ballet*.*

Reader Helen Scotland from Airdrie writes "We here in Glasgow have heard and read often of José Greco the Spanish dancer, but we never dared hope that he would cross the border. At the Royal Theatre Glasgow where he has recently entertained us for two weeks people crowded into the theatre each evening, a little uncertain, silent and solemn. After each performance a happy, laughing, excited and talkative audience came out through the exit doors."

*José Greco, famous Spanish dancer, last seen in London in 1951, will be dancing in London in December when, after having completed a season in Glasgow and Dublin, he opens with his Company at Festival Hall on Christmas Eve for three weeks. In 1940 Greco joined Argentinita and danced with her until she died in 1945. He then became the partner of Pilar Lopez, Argentinita's sister, and with her reorganised the famous Ballet Espagnol and remained with them for the next three years. After making a film called *Manolete*, which met with great success, he then decided to form his own Company, The José Greco Spanish Ballet.*

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JOSÉ GRECO

Since then he has made many tours throughout Europe and America, the season on Broadway had to be extended from four to eight weeks, and the transcontinental tour which followed proved so successful that they were booked for each successive year until the summer of 1956.

Our postage account is extremely heavy, when writing to the Editor please remember to enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you require a reply.

NORTH LONDON B.C. Miss K. Greenlaw, 95 Hornsey Lane, London, N.6.

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BALLET GUIDE

DECEMBER

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

Owing to the cancellation of the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company's
visit to Moscow, the Company will return to the Royal Opera House
London a month earlier than originally intended and open its season
on November 21.

THE BOX OFFICE IS NOW OPEN for booking for the following
performances:

Wednesday, Nov. 21	<i>Cinderella with Fonteyn, Somes, Grant</i>
7.30 p.m.	
Saturday, Nov. 24	<i>Cinderella with Fonteyn, Somes, Grant</i>
7.30 p.m.	
Tuesday, Nov. 27	<i>Cinderella with Nerina, Blair, Shaw</i>
7.30 p.m.	
Wednesday, Dec. 5	<i>Sylvia with Fonteyn, Somes, Farron, Grant</i>
7.30 p.m.	
Saturday, Dec. 8	<i>Sylvia with Fonteyn, Somes, Farron, Grant</i>
7.30 p.m.	
Wednesday, Dec. 12	<i>Cinderella with Fonteyn, Somes, Grant, Farron</i>
7.30 p.m.	

In addition there are three Saturday matinee performances of ballet
as follows:

Saturday, Nov. 24	<i>Cinderella with Nerina, Blair, Shaw</i>
2 p.m.	
Saturday, Dec. 1	<i>Cinderella with Fonteyn, Somes, Grant</i>
2 p.m.	
Saturday, Dec. 8	<i>Sylvia with Beriosova, Chatfield, Farron, Grant</i>
2 p.m.	

Booking for these matinee performances will open at the Royal
Opera House on November 17, 1956.

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE BALLET

W/c. Nov. 26	<i>New Theatre, Hull</i>
„ Dec. 3	<i>Theatre Royal, Nottingham</i>
„ Dec. 10	<i>Gaumont Theatre, Ipswich</i>

No further dates available for Dec. at time of going to press.

FESTIVAL BALLET

W/c. Nov. 26	<i>Opera House, Belfast</i>
„ Dec. 3	<i>Empire, Newcastle</i>
„ Dec. 19	<i>Stoll Theatre, London (evenings only) the London</i> season runs to Jan. 19.

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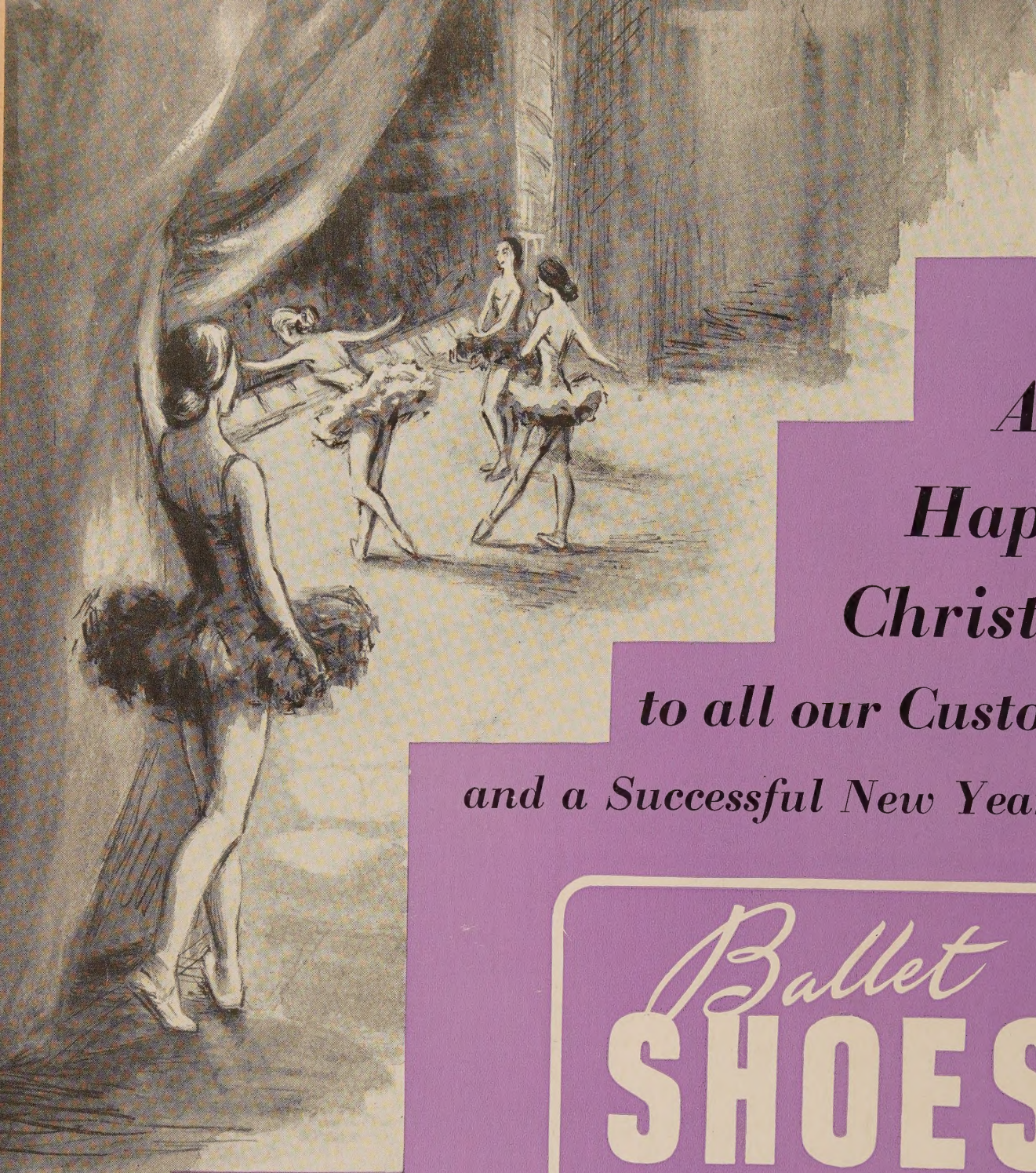


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